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RUEHFL/AMCONSUL FLORENCE PRIORITY 3904
RUEHMIL/AMCONSUL MILAN PRIORITY 0339
RUEHNP/AMCONSUL NAPLES PRIORITY 4120
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA PRIORITY 0048

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 001299

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/CCA JARAHN HILLSMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/24/2019

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SUBJECT: ITALY: RESPONSE FOR REVIEW OF SUSPENSION OF TITLE
III OF THE LIBERTAD ACT

REF: STATE 115416

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Barbara Leaf for reasons 1.
4(b) and 1.4(d)

¶1. (U) This message is post's response to reftel request for updated information necessary for the President's consideration of continued suspension of Title III of the LIBERTAD Act.

¶2. (C) There has been no significant change in Italian relations with Cuba over the past six months. Italy engages Cuba on the advancement of democracy and human rights within the framework of the Common Position adopted by the EU in 1996, and most recently assessed in June 2009 at the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) meeting. The GOI also engages Cuba through bilateral interactions with diplomatic counterparts and regular contact with the democratic opposition by the GOI's mission in Havana.

¶3. (C) Public statements condemning human right's abuses are limited to the EU level. The Italian Chamber of Deputies has made no known statements on the topic recently.

¶4. (C) As part of a tour of Asia and European capitals, Cuban Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Dagoberto Rodriguez Barrera visited Italy on October 15, 2009. He met with MFA Undersecretary Vincenzo Scotti to discuss bilateral relations with Cuba and relations within the framework of the EU. They also discussed the human rights situation in Cuba and Scotti highlighted what he characterized as the "positive new approach of the US administration." He expressed his hope that the Cuban government would seize the opportunity presented by "the new approach of the Obama administration towards the island state." Italian Deputy Minister for Foreign Trade from the Ministry of Economic Development visited the International Fair in Cuba in November 2009 in support of Italian enterprise. This visit focused on commercial, financial, and economic issues.

¶5. (U) According to the 2008 USG Investment Climate Report on Italy, the country has bilateral investment agreements with Cuba. At the November 2009 Havana Trade Fair, which emphasized increasing opportunities for Italian-Cuba contact, a significant number of Italian businesses attended. At the Fair, there were 3,000 copies of catalogs advertising Italian companies, advertisements that would also be available in the Caribbean and South America, and catalog listings. Italy ranks as the sixth largest supplier country to Cuba and the third for number of investments in Cuba after Spain and Canada. Telecom Italia controls 27% of Etecsa, Cuba's sole telephone company. This is a slight decrease from the previous share of just over 29%. Telecom Italia controls internet and data transmission. Due to high levels of

tourism which have positively impacted the profitability of Etesca, Telecom Italia has maintained its interest in the company. The contracts between Telecom Italia and Etecsa include technical assistance, traffic data, and recovery costs.

¶6. (C) There are a limited number of exchange programs between Italy and Cuba. There are a "few" scholarships offered to Cubans, but "not big numbers" according to Michele Pala, MFA Office Director for Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean. No scholarships are offered to Italians. Pala was not aware of any Cuban-paid medical travel for Italians, nor of any Cuban doctors working in Italy as part of an exchange program.

THORNE